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ABSTRACT

This book examines how government boarding schools were used for acculturating American Indian youth to "American" ways of thinking and living from 1875 to 1928. Based on government archives, student and teacher autobiographies, and school newspapers, this book proposes that the last "Indian War" was fought against Native American children in the dormitories and classrooms of government boarding schools. The government advocated the removal of Indian children from their homes for extended periods of time in order that white "civilization" could take root while extinguishing Indian culture and any childhood memories of "savagism." Specifically, the book focuses on policy formulation and how reformers and government officials came to look upon education as a central feature of the new Indian policy. A detailed analysis explains how educational policy was translated into institutional practice, describing the entire process whereby Indian agents, school superintendents, teachers, and staff went about the business of "civilizing" Indian youth. Finally, the book describes the educational experiences of Indian students, how Indian students responded to acculturation efforts, and what happened when they returned to their reservation homes. In the end, reformers clearly failed to achieve their objective of assimilation because congressional parsimony never allowed the educational assault to be waged with the intensity that reformers envisioned, and because Indian students were not passive recipients of the curriculum of civilization. The book contains references in chapter notes, photographs, and an index. (LP)

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